

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Memoir depicts nomadic childhood in the aftermath of the Holocaust
*From the foothills of the Himalayas to America, one family's search for home
spanned four countries across three continents*

New York, NY—Acclaimed writer Annette Libeskind Berkovits returns to the literary scene with her latest title **“Aftermath: Coming of Age on Three Continents” (September 13, 2022)**. Releasing from Amsterdam Publishers, one of the world’s largest publishers of Holocaust memoirs, “Aftermath” traces Annette’s nomadic childhood in the wake of World War Two. Traversing four countries across three continents, young Annette senses that her family is different from others but she’s too young to understand her parents’ wartime trauma. She must find inner resources to deal with the onset of teenage angst as well as linguistic, and cultural challenges.



The book’s three colored parts aptly capture the sensations, emotions and experiences of each new home. In Red, readers glean a sense of her early life in Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Communist Poland, where latent antisemitism leaves an imprint on her psyche. In Blue, Annette revels in finally being a part of the Jewish people and in the blueness of the Mediterranean. But soon her world is shaken. She must leave this beloved place for alien America if the family is to remain intact. Separation from her beloved father, or from her nation? Such a difficult decision piled on top of normal adolescence is almost too much to bear, but Annette soldiers on and performs a seeming miracle: speaking no English, she gets herself admitted to one of the most selective public high schools in America just weeks after her arrival in what is truly a new world. Now she’ll have to make the Green of the Statue of Liberty keep its promise of a new life.

Complete with personal photos, Annette’s masterful retelling of her youth showcases the alternating pain, joy and resilience necessary to build a new life, time and again. A bonus of this engaging story is seeing Annette’s younger brother Daniel Libeskind, now one of the world’s most acclaimed architects, as he partners with his sister in their childhood escapades. A deeply affecting story of the ways children subtly absorb family trauma, “Aftermath” is also a triumphant and inspirational tale of the resilience of the immigrant spirit.



“A gorgeous bouquet of a book... both a touching coming-of-age memoir and an inspirational immigrant story, an absolute pleasure to read.”

—**Andrew Nagorski**; author of *Hitlerland*

“Aftermath: Coming of Age on Three Continents”

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Annette Libeskind Berkovits is the author of two acclaimed memoirs: “In the Unlikeliest of Places: How Nachman Libeskind Survived the Nazis, Gulags and Soviet Communism” a story of her father’s survival, and “Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator.” She has also penned a poetry book, “Erythra Thalassa: Brain Disrupted” and a historical fiction novel, “The Corset Maker.” “Aftermath” is her latest release. To learn more about Annette’s life and work, visit her website: annetteberkovits.com



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In an interview, Annette Libeskind Berkovits can discuss:

- How children of survivors bear the weight of the Holocaust, and the ways in which they can subtly absorb family trauma
- The unique challenges the author and her family faced in each continent as they sought a new life, and the ways in which she remained resilient through it all
- How art perseveres in the wake of the Holocaust, as evidenced by her career as an author and her brother Daniel Libeskind’s career as a famed architect
- How Annette, who spoke no English, managed admission to the highly selective Bronx High School of Science just a few weeks after arriving in the US
- What aspects of “Aftermath” overlap with “The Corset Maker,” Annette’s recent historical fiction novel inspired by her mother’s life



Praise for “Aftermath”

*“Annette Libeskind Berkovits’ **Aftermath** is **a gorgeous bouquet of a book**, chronicling her family’s journey from Soviet Kyrgyzstan to Poland in the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, their subsequent sojourn in Israel and, finally, their gamble on building a new life for themselves in the United States. It is both a touching coming-of-age memoir and an inspirational immigrant story, an absolute pleasure to read.”*

—**Andrew Nagorski**; an award-winning author and journalist who spent more than three decades as a foreign correspondent and editor for Newsweek. Former Vice President and director of public policy for the East-West Institute, an international affairs think tank. Author of *Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power*, 2012; *The Nazi Hunters*, 2016; and *1941: The Year Germany Lost the War*

*“Aftermath is a delightful memoir that draws you in with its lively, child’s-eye perspective. Spanning three continents, the book vividly depicts the constrictions of post-war Poland, the vibrant energy and material rigors of the young state of Israel, and the expansiveness of the post-war American dream. **Berkovits is sensitive to what it feels like to carry the burdens of history on the slim shoulders of childhood**; to the dislocation and identity confusion of the immigrant experience; and to the ways in which a child absorbs parental trauma. Most of all, the book is **a joyful celebration of the adaptability and resilience of childhood.**”*

—**Rabbi Rena Blumenthal**, psychologist in New York City and Jerusalem; author of *The Book of Israela*; Former Assistant Director of the Office of Religious & Spiritual Life and Advisor to Jewish Students at Vassar College and Board member of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

*“In her charming and inspiring memoir, Annette Libeskind Berkovits, manages to combine terror, deprivation, desperation, hope, romance, and humor into **an artful story of wandering, love, loss, and ultimately triumph**. Berkovits’ personal journey from Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, to Poland, to Kibbutz Gvat, then Tel Aviv and finally New York, mirrors the awesome and awful saga of 20th century Jews. Berkovits draws the reader deeply into her sad, wounded, but loving family, even as she presents the full range of the modern Jewish experience from tragic loss to redemption and healing.”*

—**Rabbi Phil Graubart**, Judaica Director at the San Diego Jewish Academy and author of ten books, the latest being *Women and God*.



*“Aftermath is an enthralling coming-of-age memoir recounting the hardships and challenges facing a young girl's family in the years following the Holocaust. Searching for a place to call home, they move from a valley in Kyrgyzstan to the streets of war-torn Poland and then to a kibbutz in Israel, a land of dazzling contrasts. The children quickly learn Hebrew and relax into the communal lifestyle of the kibbutz, but life is not easy for the parents. The mother, a talented seamstress, has little interest in farming and, more importantly, the father, not speaking Hebrew, cannot find a job in Israel. What to do? Go to America, 'the Golden Land.' With characters you genuinely care about, exotic locales, and edge-of-your-seat tension, **Aftermath is the best memoir I've read in years.**”*

—**Barbara Donsky**, International Best-Selling author of *Missing Mother* and *Veronica's Grave: A Daughter's Memoir*

*“Aftermath by Annette Libeskind Berkovits is **one of those necessary books that provides a rare account of the lives of Holocaust survivors after the war.** Most survivors did not repatriate, but the Libeskind family did for some post war years. It poignantly depicts how this Jewish family negotiated the residual antisemitism in Poland as it tried to re-establish itself. An impossible feat, the family then followed the heart-rending nomadic path of so many survivors, moving from place to place until almost out of exhaustion, they settled in the U.S.”*

—**Ellen G. Friedman, PhD**, Professor of English and Women's & Gender Studies, The College of New Jersey; Coordinator of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program; author of *The Seven, a Family Holocaust Story*

*“Aftermath is the remarkable memoir of two resourceful children and their parents as they emerge from the losses of the Holocaust. In cinematic, unsentimental language, Berkovits places us at the scenes of the crimes. But she also depicts personal victories, such as her classroom walkout to protest being shamed in school during Christian prayers in Poland or getting into one of the most selective public high schools in America without taking the required entrance exam. Aftermath is **both a personal and universal immigrant survival story of striving for the American Dream.** Before feminism was a glimmer in Gloria Steinem's eye, there were girls and women like Berkovits and her mother. Gritty, intelligent, iron-willed survivors who, against all odds, made the best of the worst possible situations, stitching together a new American life.”*

—**Alan Sharavsky**; Author of *Boarding School Bastard, A Memoir: Life in an Orphanage for Fatherless Boys*



About Amsterdam Publishers; Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Why is publishing Holocaust memoirs by survivors important?

[Amsterdam publishers](#) is the largest international publisher in Europe of Holocaust memoirs by survivors.

Covid-19 has hastened the departure of many Holocaust survivors, resisters, and eyewitnesses of the Second World War. This is especially troubling news given the current rise of antisemitism, neofascism, political extremism, and manipulation of the facts about the Holocaust across the world. During the events at the Capitol on 6 January 2021 some of the rioters wore anti-Jewish hate shirts making mockery of the annihilation of European Jews.

As never before, reading about the Holocaust seems crucial. We need not only facts and figures, though these, of course, are essential. We need the stories behind the numbers. We need to learn about the life experiences of individuals and families. What were their lives like before, during and after the Holocaust.

Education is the key to preventing antisemitism and Holocaust denial. Hatred, and suspicion of 'the other' can only be overcome if we gain a true understanding of the horrors of the Holocaust and the long shadow it has cast on multigenerational families of survivors.

Holocaust memoirs and post Holocaust Jewish literature show the perseverance of ordinary people whose only 'crime' was being Jewish in the face of unprecedented discrimination and persecution. Stories by survivors are an irreplaceable source of learning, and the most effective tool when it comes to connecting with young generations today.



An Interview with **Annette Libeskind Berkovits**

- 1. Your coming-of-age memoir, “Aftermath,” spans three continents and four countries: Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Israel, and the United States. How did each of these vastly different places influence you?**

I have a strong suspicion that during my time in Kyrgyzstan my brain became more plastic and more receptive to learning new languages. As a baby, toddler and young girl I was exposed to not only my parents’ Yiddish and Polish, but the languages of the locals such as Russian, Kyrgyz and Uzbek. In Poland, I learned the meaning of antisemitism. In Israel, I discovered the feeling of belonging to a tribe and in the US, I learned how to be a resilient adult.

- 2. What does home mean to you? Did certain countries feel more like “home” than others?**

There is no question that Israel felt most like home when I was young. But now, home to me is any place where my loved ones are. Home is not a place to me, it’s more a feeling of warmth and acceptance.

- 3. How did the tragic loss your family suffered during the Holocaust affect your childhood? Did you absorb the trauma of your parents?**

Oh my goodness, that is such a complex question that would probably take years on a psychiatrist’s couch to parse out. I can only say that growing up for the first thirteen years of my life without any close family around—no grandparents, not even their photos, no aunts or uncles, or cousins, made for a very lonely, isolated life. To get a better sense of the impact one would really need to read my story in its entirety.

- 4. Both your parents were very artistic people, and you and your brother, Daniel Libeskind, have both gone on to lead very artistic lives. How did the Holocaust influence your family’s relationship to art?**

I think it affected each of us in very different ways. My father was a very optimistic person. He didn’t want to look back, he wanted to look forward, especially in America, and his richly colored artwork—to which he came late in life—reflected it. My mother was very introspective and deeply missed her murdered sisters and mother. Her work,



especially her writing, was dark, but she had a sharp sense of humor and made whimsical dolls named Shakespeare and his wife and needlework of Adam and Eve. As for my brother, it is no wonder he has designed many acclaimed Jewish museums around the world, with the Berlin Museum being one of the most famous. My own works tend to be on the darker themes, war, and loss, except for one memoir which is fairly light-hearted.

5. Tell us about the structure of this memoir. Why did you choose to separate the book into three parts: Red, Blue, and Green?

These parts are meant to evoke the sense memory of each place where I grew up. Red signifies not only the red Soviet flags, but the red poppy fields of the Fergana Valley beneath the towering Himalayas and at the other extreme, the murder of my relatives. Blue is the color of the Mediterranean, the sky over kibbutz Gvat and the Israeli flag. Green is the patina of the Statue of Liberty that greeted us in America and the myth that greenbacks lined its streets. The “greene” was also a slur applied to newcomers without language or jobs, by already settled Jews.

6. After arriving in New York City, despite not yet having mastered the English language, you defied the odds to become admitted into one of the most prestigious schools in the country. How did you achieve such a feat?

This must be the only question that I’d rather not answer directly as it would be a major spoiler. Suffice it to say that I had a deep desire to enter the Bronx High School of Science and wasn’t going to let the lack of English deter me.

7. What do you hope readers will learn from your story of resilience and triumph?

I think every reader will have a different take away from the story, depending on the age of the reader. For some, it’ll be the idea that one need not give in to humiliation or obstacles, but find a way to call upon inner strength and find a creative, out-of-the box way to overcome them. To others, the idea that family trauma need not be an ever-present cloud that impedes joy, may resonate. And others still may take heart in the notion that not only trauma, but challenging junctures in one’s life can be a font of inspiration fueling a creative life.